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ABSTRACT

Since 1983 the Migrant Education Program Evaluation (MEPE) has collected data about migrant children in summer programs throughout the state of Illinois. Testing is done during the summer months with migrant students in grades 3, 5, and 7. Preliminary screening identifies students who are limited-English speakers, and they are excluded from further testing. Students are given the standardized English Language Arts Test (Scholastic Aptitude Tests). Test materials are sent to a state office for tabulation, and local project directors are notified of the test results. The MEPE has several advantages. Local program directors no longer must rely on internal and often subjective instruments for program evaluation and planning. Because the MEPE uses a nationally normed test, it allows directors to compare migrant children with the general population. It provides information for local education agencies requesting data on migrant children enrolled in summer programs and gives teachers a place to begin instruction during the regular school year. From the local perspective the MEPE has two disadvantages. First, the number of students tested at the local level may be small, raising questions about the validity and usefulness of test results for evaluating local program effectiveness. Second, limited-English speaking children are not tested. (JHZ)

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Migrant Education Program Evaluation:

A Local Perspective

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Introduction

Migrant education programs have provided, and continue to provide, quality education programs for migratory children ages 4-18. Without such programs, children of migratory status would not and could not compete successfully with their 'more stable' counterparts. Academically, migratory children in projects both in West Chicago, and Normal-Bloomington, have lagged behind a minimum of two and a half years with similar age students both in Math and English Language Arts. Migrant Education affords the children to concentrate on a smaller teacher-student ratio than normally experienced in the traditional programs. Hiring experienced bilingual staff members ensures that students with limited English fluency and comprehension will be adequately served.

Evaluating Migratory children on a local level has proven to be somewhat difficult and haphazard in the past years. Very little continuity between previous schooling and present Migrant programs was evident. Fortunately, the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) has allowed projects to make a sincere head way towards the accurate assessment of migrant children. Tracking the child allows (vis-a-vis, academic profile) teachers to BRIDGE previous taught skills and present skills under study in order to

correctively maintain a complete and accurate picture of the migrant child in the classroom. Efforts such as a "snap-shot" approach is being undertaken in order to provide further data, accurately assessing the migrant child. The data gathering procedure is as follows: 1) During the summer months (usually in early June, a language assessment instrument is given to migrant students grades 3,5,7; 2) Based upon the results of the language testing (usually the LAS) students were selected to participate in the testing program; 3) Based upon the results teachers determined if "out of testing" should take place; 4) After the final selection procedure, students were informed; 5) Parents are then notified of this testing and encouraged to send the student to school the day of testing (usually in the first week of July); 6) Finally, test, materials, etc, are sent to the state office for final collection and tabulation. Local project directors are notified soonafter the results of the testing. Ms. Brenda Pessin will be providing the States' perspective. From a local perspective, I would like to react to its effectiveness; advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

The Migrant Education Program Evaluation (MEPE) provides the mechanism for local project directors to assess where

staff should be emphasized and resources stressed. As a project director for eight years in two different programs (enrollment of 200+ in one and 40+ in another),accurate evaluation of migratory children plays a key role in overall program success. Prior to the inception of a standardize English Language Arts Test (SAT) project directors of large and small programs relied on internal and often times subjective intruments for program evaluation. At the conclusion of the summer of '85 we will be able to determine how our migratory children fair with their counterparts in English Language arts. Parenthetically, it will also provide some insights into the programs adopted by migrant programs throughtout the state of Illinois.

In West Chicago, some 200 children were pre and post test every June and August respectively. Data gathered provided us a mere glance of what children ought to know, and what skills they needed help with. As a project director, I used pre test scores as information determining what areas should be addressed (i.e. computational skills, phonics,...) all on a hit and miss basis. Students that have successfully achieved the goals and objectives prescribed by the teachers during the summer months, were not as successful during the regular school year. By the time we determined the skills to be taught, the summer

project was over. The regular school year had similar problems in the inability to assess current migrant children. Fortunately, the MSRTS provided programs with more accurate and updated information.

In Bloomington-Normal, some 40 students were pre and post test in June and August, 1985. Vis-a vis the MSRTS we have been able to keep track of the students from summer to summer. Less time was spent on diagnostic work and more time was spent on instruction. During the summer of 1983 a MEPE program was introduced with the purpose of taking a snap-shot look at how migratory children were doing in English (SAT). Several positive features for our project will be evident in the coming months because of this:

1- After testing certain grade levels, (3,5,7,) in 1983, we will be able retest previous third graders that are now in the fifth grade and see if there are any significant differences between such scores. This may have some implication regarding programs, limited English proficiency testing procedure(s)...

2- Using a nationally validated test (SAT) we will be able to compare norms for similar age children.

3- Information from a MEPE hsve been used with LEA's requesting data on mirgratory children in summer programs.

If affords local directors as myself to share information that will help impact the regular school year.

4- Information from a MEPE has assisted teachers in the regular school year. It has provided them a 'place to begin' without much previous data.

Disadvantages/Recommendations

Despite the efforts made regarding testing and evaluating of children from a migratory background, much work is needed from a project directors point of view. Collecting hard data with children is often difficult and exacerbated because of the mirgratory status of our children. They are not settled in one place long enough for accurate data to be compiled. The major disadvantages, from a local perspective are:

1) A small number of children are tested creating a small N which may bring about some questions regarding validity of such collected data.

2) The migrant children tested were children whose linguistic ability was greater than those limited English speaking children. Thus, these very students may not need the testing-other standardized tests may been just as valid with these more fluent children.

3) The limited English speaking children were not tested. I understand that investigations are underway in search for a test that will accurate assess the needs of the limited English speaking migrant child.

Conclusion

The above statements are my perception as a project director for eight summers. The advantages, for me, out weight the disadvantages. Specifically, a MFPE program is underway, needing refinement,however bringing us closer in accurately assessing,evaluating, and planning the needs of the migrant child. In order for project directors to do an effective job with migrant children, testing such as this must continue. I endorse the testing program enthusiastically as I see the benefits in the near future for our migrant children.